

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for providing help information that explains to a user of an electronic television program guide how the electronic television program guide operates, the method comprising:

providing a user with an opportunity to access help information for a portion of an electronic television program guide; and

providing help information that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

2. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing a user with an opportunity to access help information comprises:

displaying a help icon using the electronic television program guide; and

providing a user with an opportunity to select the help icon.

3. The method defined in claim 1 wherein:

the method further comprises querying the user to identify a portion of the electronic television program guide for which the user desires help information; and

providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying help information for the portion of the electronic television program guide identified by the user.

4. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying

the help information in response to a user depressing a help key on a remote control.

31 5. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying a text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

6. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying an instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

7. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises playing an instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

8. The method defined in claim 1 wherein providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

9. The method defined in claim 8 wherein:
the electronic television program guide has a plurality of operating points;
the method further comprises tracking a current operating point in the plurality of operating points; and

providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises providing the help information based on the current operating point.

31 10. The method defined in claim 8 wherein providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying a context-sensitive text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

11. The method defined in claim 8 wherein providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises displaying a context-sensitive instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

12. The method defined in claim 8 wherein providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises playing a context-sensitive instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

13. The method defined in claim 1 further comprising:
storing the help information in a memory; and
retrieving the help information from the memory in response to a user indicating a desire to access the help information.

14. An electronic television program guide system that provides help information for explaining to a user of an electronic television program guide how the electronic television program guide operates, the system comprising:

means for providing a user with an opportunity to access help information for a portion of an electronic television program guide;

means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

15. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing a user with an opportunity to access help information comprises:

means for displaying a help icon using the electronic television program guide; and

means for providing a user with an opportunity to select the help icon.

16. The system defined in claim 14 wherein:

the system further comprises means for querying the user to identify a portion of the electronic television program guide for which the user desires help information; and

the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for displaying help information for the portion of the electronic television program guide identified by the user.

17. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates

comprises means for displaying the help information in response to a user depressing a help key on a remote control.

18. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for displaying a text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

19. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for displaying an instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

20. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for playing an instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

21. The system defined in claim 14 wherein the means for providing help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

22. The system defined in claim 21 wherein:

the electronic television program guide has a plurality of operating points;

the system further comprises means for tracking a current operating point in the plurality of operating points; and

the means for providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for providing the help information based on the current operating point.

23. The system defined in claim 21 wherein the means for providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for displaying a context-sensitive text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

24. The system defined in claim 21 wherein the means for providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for displaying a context-sensitive instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

25. The system defined in claim 21 wherein the means for providing context-sensitive help information that explains to the user how a portion of the electronic television program guide operates comprises means for playing a context-sensitive instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates.

26. The system defined in claim 14 further comprising:
means for storing the help information; and

means for retrieving the help information from the means for storing in response to a user indicating a desire to access the help information.

27. An electronic television program guide system that provides help information for explaining to a user of an electronic television program guide how the electronic television program guide operates, the system comprising:

a video display generator;
a remote controller;
a microcontroller; and
an electronic television program guide executed by the microcontroller and programmed to (1) provide the user with an opportunity to access help information for a portion of the electronic television program guide using the remote controller and (2) provide help information that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates to the video display generator for display.

28. The system defined in claim 27 wherein the electronic television program guide is further programmed to:
provide a help icon to the video display generator for display; and
provide a user with an opportunity to select the help icon using the remote controller.

29. The system defined in claim 27 wherein the electronic television program guide is further programmed to:
query the user to identify a portion of the electronic television program guide for which the user desires help information, with the remote controller; and

provide help information for the portion of the electronic program guide identified by the user to the video display generator for display.

B! 30. The system defined in claim 27 wherein:
the remote controller comprises a help key; and
the electronic television program guide is further configured to provide the help information to the video display generator in response to a user depressing the help key on the remote controller.

31. The system defined in claim 27 wherein:
the help information comprises a text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates; and
the electronic television program guide is further programmed to provide the text message to the video display generator for display.

32. The system defined in claim 27 wherein:
the help information comprises an instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates;
the electronic television program guide is further configured to provide the instructional video to the video display generator for display.

33. The system defined in claim 27 wherein:
the system further comprises a television;
the help information comprises an instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates; and

the electronic television program guide is configured to provide the audio program to the video display generator for playback by the television.

31 34. The system defined in claim 27 wherein:
the help information comprises context-sensitive help information; and
the electronic television program guide is further programmed to provide the context-sensitive help information to the video display generator for display.

35. The system defined in claim 34 wherein:
the electronic television program guide has a plurality of operating points in which a user operates;
the electronic television program guide is further configured to track a current operating point in the plurality of operating points and provide the context-sensitive help information to the video display generator based on the current operating point.

36. The system defined in claim 34 wherein:
the context-sensitive help information comprises a context-sensitive text message that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates; and
the electronic television program guide is further programmed to provide the context-sensitive text message to the video display generator for display.

37. The system defined in claim 34 wherein:
the help information comprises a context-sensitive instructional video that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates; and

the electronic television program guide is further configured to provide the context-sensitive instructional video to the video display generator for display.

31 38. The system defined in claim 34 wherein:
the system further comprises a television;
the help information comprises a context-sensitive instructional audio program that explains to the user how the portion of the electronic television program guide operates; and
the electronic television program guide is configured to provide the context-sensitive audio program to the video display generator for playback by the television.

39. The system defined in claim 27 wherein the electronic television program guide is further programmed to:
store the help information in a memory; and
retrieve the help information from the memory in response to a user indicating a desire to access the help information with the remote controller.

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